

Let's look at it from the point of view of the terrorists. I think they misjudged us in thinking we wouldn't respond. We did respond, and we responded aggressively and we responded effectively. We sent a very strong message. But now if we pull out or if we set a timeframe for pulling out that says just wait a definite period of time, 1 year, wait that period of time and the United States starts pulling back, how do the terrorist groups read that?

My colleague from Massachusetts would have a certain point of view on that; maybe others would, my colleague from Michigan. I respect the motivation. I am delighted we are having this debate. It is important we have this debate with our Nation and with the world now.

The conclusions I draw from this are different. If we set timeframes, it says to them that they have us where they want, and they can start declaring victory in their own words saying: Look, we have them down; in a year's period of time, they are gone; all we have to do is wait that period of time.

We have to see this through to a successful conclusion. That does not mean, in any respect whatsoever, that I oppose us repositioning troops, pulling down the number of troops in Iraq or taking our troops away from the Sunni Triangle and handing more of that over to the Iraqis. It seems to me that our timeframes, as set by our military leaders—as set by the military leaders—that they would be the ones to recommend saying it is time we can pull troop levels down.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BROWNBAC. Not now. I have limited time, and I want to make this statement, if I may. That we can, at the appointment of our military leaders, start pulling our troops away from the Sunni Triangle so we can have the Iraqis taking over more and more of the security in more dangerous areas. I think that is an important thing for us to say here in this debate as well, that in opposing setting a timeframe for pulling out, we are not opposing changing tactics, or if our military leaders say it is time, we can start pulling troops down, let's do it. I want that to take place. But it should be the military leaders doing this, without the dictates of us saying here that we are just going to set an arbitrary timeframe for us to pull on out of this region. I think it sends the exact wrong signal, particularly at this point in time when we have momentum that we have gained and we have an Iraqi government in place.

Frankly, through the help of this debate, we are sending a message to the Iraqi people and their government that the United States is not in this for an unlimited period of time. We do expect the Iraqis to step up. You have to step up in taking more of this on and moving more of this forward. I think this should be done on our working with and listening to the military leaders of

what they would say would be the right route for us to go on this and not us setting an arbitrary date.

This has been, in my estimation, a very good debate to have. But I think it is important at the end of the debate that we have a very strong and clear vote on this that we are staying, and we are going to see this through to the end. We are not dictating to the military leadership an arbitrary time period, and we are going to win this war on terrorism, period, and that we have the resolve to win this war on terrorism. I think that is important for us to do.

I want to thank my colleague from South Dakota for chairing this debate at this point in time. I do hope that my colleagues join me again tomorrow in voting against this resolution with this timeframe.

Mr. KERRY. Would the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BROWNBAC. If we have time on our side, but I don't know if we have other colleagues wishing to speak.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. The Senator from Kansas, if he wants to yield for a question, I guess that is your prerogative. We have other speakers coming. I am hesitant to allow too much time to burn off the clock.

Mr. BROWNBAC. I would rather reserve the balance of our time for other speakers.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I appreciate very much the comments of my colleague from Kansas, because I think he too has laid out very clearly what the stakes are in this debate.

As I said earlier, we will have an opportunity to vote tomorrow on both of these amendments, the Levin amendment, the sense of Congress amendment, and then the Kerry amendment, both of which are directed at some sort of a timeline with respect to the conflict in Iraq. As I mentioned earlier, I think as we have undertaken to allow a very open debate on this, which, as I said before, I think is a good thing to do, particularly in the context of debating the Defense authorization bill, we are hearing from both sides some of the emotion that is felt on this and also some very strong opinions and views but, oftentimes, a different interpretation of the facts.

I think what we need to do in this debate is try and focus on the facts as they exist on the ground and not sometimes as we understand them here from what we read in the press, but we need to rely, in my judgment, on those people who are day in and day out fighting the good fight in the theater. Our commanders, our generals, our troops who are conducting this operation over there are doing the Lord's work, in my opinion, in protecting us from terrorist threats that exist. I dare say, as we look at the type of threat we will face in the future, it seems to me, at least, that the success or failure of the operation in Iraq is going to bear heavily

on whether we are ultimately going to succeed in the war on terror.

People have argued about whether we ought to be in Iraq in the first place, and that is a debate where Members on the other side have said we shouldn't have been there, we shouldn't have gone in the first place. Most who are making that argument are people who supported the resolution to go there, and I think many of those people also realize as well—and I think the vote will reflect this tomorrow—that they have strong misgivings about us pulling out prematurely and putting in jeopardy the good work that has been done by the troops in that region already.

So I expect tomorrow when we have this vote we will see a very strong vote against the Kerry amendment. I think it will reflect, hopefully, the will of this body at this point in time as we are making good progress, I think, at a very important turning point in the war in Iraq, the progress that has been made on the ground both with respect to the Iraqi security forces as well as with the Government of Iraq as it stands up. We want to make sure we are not telegraphing to our enemies that at this very point where we literally have them on their backs, that we are going to let them up and begin to assume many of the things that they were doing in the past: the killings, the planning, the launching of attacks against people not only in that region but elsewhere around the world and, in many cases, people from freedom-loving countries and American citizens. We want to make sure that never happens again.

My colleague from Alabama is here on the floor. Would the Senator from Alabama like to speak on this subject? We are waiting for the Senator from Georgia to arrive. He is not here yet, so if the Senator from Alabama would like to claim some time, I am certainly willing to yield to him. I think we have about 10 minutes left on our side if the Senator from Alabama would like to make some remarks.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I do have some remarks, and I would deliver those after the others have finished their time tonight if it is not too late, and I would just share a few thoughts at this time.

We have been given a great heritage in our country. We have been given a Nation that is the greatest Nation in the world at this time. We have the finest military the world has ever known. We have a great democracy where we have full and vigorous debate.

I was here when we debated the question of whether or not to issue that ultimatum to Saddam Hussein, and we knew then if he didn't accept it, if he didn't allow the inspectors in and if he didn't renounce weapons of mass destruction, we would be going to war, and that was the vote and we knew it and everybody discussed it. It went on for months. People say it was quick. It went on for months.